

## CANAWLERS AT REST

### JAMES SIDNEY HINTON

Find-A-Grave # 7183765

**b. December 25, 1834**

**d. November 6, 1892**

**By Robert F. Schmidt**



On Christmas day, December 25, 1834, James Sidney Hinton was born in Raleigh, North Carolina. He was the son of free blacks, John Cook Hinton, a local businessman, and Hannah (Mitchell) Hinton, who was a piano teacher. Mrs. Hinton was also an active member of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Moving from the South just prior to the Civil War to the free state of Indiana seemed to make sense and the family arrived in Terre Haute, Indiana in 1848, when young James was 13 years old.

James attended a private black subscription school that was founded by Hiram Rhodes Revels. Revels was also born in 1827 in North Carolina, had moved to the Midwest, attended school in Union county, Indiana and became a minister in 1845. He was also a religious teacher and established subscription schools to promote black education. Revels went on to later become the 1<sup>st</sup> US Black Senator from the state of Mississippi during Reconstruction in 1870-71.

It was at the subscription school in Vigo county that James Hinton began his formal education. Then, at age 16, he attended a Quaker School at Hartford (Pimento) in southern Vigo county. He later went to the Greenville Institute in Greenville, Ohio.

As James matured he was befriended by a Terre Haute physician who urged him to study medicine and become a missionary. James decided that school teaching and becoming a barber were more suitable for him at that time.

In 1859 James was elected Grand Master of the Black Masons. With the firing on Fort Sumter, James wanted to enlist in the Union Army at Indianapolis, but he was denied due to his color. In 1862 he moved to Indianapolis where he opened a real estate office. Also in that year he married a widow, Eliza J. Mitchell. Still determined to enlist for the war effort, he went east in 1862 to act as a recruiting officer for the 54<sup>th</sup> & 55<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Colored Regiments. The 54<sup>th</sup> became famous after the attack on Fort Wagner near Charleston in 1863 and was featured in the movie "Glory." Upon returning to Indianapolis as a second lieutenant, he assisted in the recruitment for the 28<sup>th</sup> Indiana Colored Troops at Fort Fremont in Indianapolis.

Following the Civil War, James served as a

promoter for the Republican Party for African American voters in Tennessee, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Indiana. In his travels he also promoted education for black children and equal funding for their schools. In the Republican Party he served as a presidential elector in the election of 1872 which nominated Ulysses S. Grant for a second term.

For supporting the Republican Party in Indiana he was nominated as a Trustee of the Wabash & Erie Canal in 1873 and served until 1876. This turned out to be the final chapter in the history of the old canal as it was auctioned off to private owners. However, this was no reflection on James' efforts to save it.

In 1880 James was elected to the Indiana General Assembly from Marion County. He was the first black to hold this office in the State. After only one term he was defeated by Samuel A. Ebert. Even in his later years he continued to work for the Republican Party.

James was also involved with the African Methodist Episcopal Church and became a trustee of Wilberforce University, a negro college in Wilberforce, Ohio. Wilberforce is a small black community of 1600 just north of Xenia, Ohio.

James Sidney Hinton was a skilled orator and was described as a man with an "erect and stately carriage, and is possessed of easy, though dignified manners; is graceful, and is also a fluent and entertaining conversationalist and public speaker." He died at age 57 on November 6, 1892 after attending and giving a political speech at a rally in Brazil, Indiana. He is bur-



ied in section CG, lot 13-14, at Crown Hill Cemetery in Indianapolis, Indiana.

In 2007 the Indiana General Assembly authorized a permanent Black History display in the Indiana State House. In accordance with this act, the Indiana Department of Administration, Indiana Historical Bureau and Indiana Black Legislative Caucus decided that a public art legacy project should be installed to bring more diversity to the Indiana State House sculpture collection. Sculptor Jon Hair was selected to create two traditional bronze busts to celebrate the public service of James Sidney Hinton and Julia May Carson. Carson (1938-2007) served in the Indiana House and later represented Indiana's 7<sup>th</sup> District in Congress for 10 yrs. These busts were installed on January 16, 2014 as part of a Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration at the Indiana State House.

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